

July 7, 2008

California Agricultural Vision

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you for inviting us to share our thoughts with this distinguished panel.

Speaking as a greenhouse grower, our vision for Agriculture in 2030 is a lot more greenhouse production.

There are many positive aspects of greenhouse growing:

- **Efficient Use of Water:** Most modern greenhouses are hydroponic, continuously re-using and recycling water;
- **Efficient Use of Fertilizer:** Due to hydroponic methods, only the fertilizer that the plants need is circulated in the water;
- **Groundwater is Protected:** Again, due to the hydroponic systems there is no water nor nutrients soaking into the ground;
- **Minimal to No Pesticide Use:** The greenhouse climate is controlled for the plants, but also happens to be a very positive climate for beneficial insects. Having this protected environment for the predatory insects makes it much easier to keep the upper hand on the harmful insects.
- **Yield Per Acre Very High:** By controlling the climate we are able to produce more product per acre;
- **Labor Efficiency:** We are able to attach automated devices to our greenhouses increasing labor productivity and creating an ergonomic working condition for our crew;
- **Year Round Production:** By producing year round we have balanced production and balanced employment;
- **Capture and Use of Rainwater:** We are able to capture rainwater from our rooftops and use it for our crops.

Greenhouse growing does have support from the USDA; they have recognized the importance of greenhouses to produce efficiently to offset continual urbanization of farmland, and population growth.

We also appreciate the support from the State, Governor Schwarzenegger and Secretary Kawamura. In 2005 the Governor signed the Amendment to AB 365. This Amendment to the Food and Agricultural Code clarified that greenhouses are in-fact a positive agricultural method to be included in the Williamson Act Laws pertaining to agricultural preserves.

So while we have support at the State and Federal level, unfortunately, County Governments are not showing their support. In-fact, many California Counties have made it nearly impossible to obtain permits to build greenhouses; requiring extensive studies, unreasonable demands, very high fees and extensive delays. It ends up taking years and hundreds of thousands of dollars just to obtain a permit to build a greenhouse.

Plenty of counties in other states have the opposite attitude towards greenhouse growers. I have attached an article about a county in Tennessee that welcomed a large greenhouse grower with open arms. They did everything they could to help them get started, including handling utility installation that the project required.

In addition to all of the challenges facing the rest of agriculture in our State, many greenhouse growers also have to deal with little to no support from their local County Government. This is the biggest challenge facing greenhouse growers. We need support on all levels to make sure our agricultural production is not shifted to other countries. Again thank you for having these listening sessions.

Sincerely,



Pete Overgaag
President,
Hollandia Produce